



Chairs Currey and McCrory, Ranking members Berthel and McCarty, and distinguished members of the Committee. I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on charter school authorization and for your leadership in raising Senate Bill 1096 to fix Connecticut's broken charter authorization process.

To introduce myself, my name is Jon Rosenberg, and I serve as the CEO of Hebrew Public, a nonprofit charter school management organization. Hebrew Public seeks to lead a national movement of exceptional, diverse public charter schools that teach Modern Hebrew to children of all backgrounds and prepare them to be successful global citizens. In addition to 20 years of experience running nonprofit education organizations, I also worked for 12 years as an attorney focusing on issues of civil rights and educational equity. I volunteered for many years for the Montclair Public Schools, in the community of Montclair, New Jersey where I live with my family. I have served on the boards of Ascend Learning, the Center for Learner Equity, and the National Coalition of Diverse Charter Schools. I am a past-chair of the New York City Bar Association's Committee on Education and the Law and a graduate of Columbia Law School and the University of Pennsylvania.

I write to you today in support of SB 1096 because it is my hope, and the hope of our supporters in the New Haven community, to one day soon open up a public charter school in the New Haven community. If successful, our school would be a racially, economically, and culturally diverse school with a focus on the study of Modern Hebrew and a commitment to global citizenship. If approved, Hebrew Public would be the first Connecticut charter school with a focus on teaching a specific foreign language. All of our network's schools – including those in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, California, Minnesota, and Washington DC, share this focus.

SB 1096 approaches a solution to reversing the negative impacts caused by legislation implemented in the 2015 session. Under this raised bill, the State Department of Education will have the ability to grant a charter to a new public charter school. Current law has created an obstructive system that makes it extremely difficult for an approved school to receive authorization. The current process involves coordination with three different entities and multiple steps stalling the process. Prior to the current legislation, the total timeline for a charter school to be approved from



the RFP announcement to a school formally opening was historically two years, which is in line with the experience of charter school organizations in most states.

Additionally, this legislation creates a nonlapsing account in the General Fund that will sanction SDE to fund charters approved by the State Board of Education known as the charter school approval grant account. These funds will be expended upon the granting of a charter in a fair and appropriate timeline through legislative budgetary power, maintaining legislative oversight and upholding the democratic process many fear would be lost.

Before I close, I do want to point out that the clause limiting the funding of new charter schools to two per fiscal year is extremely limiting and should be removed from the bill. As a parent myself, I'm a big believer in public school choice. Families should not be stuck with a single option of a neighborhood-based zoned elementary school. They should have an ecosystem of excellent public school options and SB 1096 seeks to make that possible and reliable for families. In New Haven, we hope to contribute toward the creation of such an ecosystem.

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